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Input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

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Summary of the Chair of the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

[Original: Spanish]

I. Introduction

1. At the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held in Mexico City from 23 to 27 May 2016, the member States adopted resolution 700 (XXXVI), sponsored by Mexico, establishing the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its targets and means of implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

2. The first meeting of the Forum was held in Mexico City, from 26 to 28 April 2017. The meeting was chaired by Mexico, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC, and convened under the auspices of the Commission.

3. The second meeting of the Forum was held in Santiago, from 18 to 20 April 2018, chaired by Mexico, and convened under the auspices of the Commission. The meeting of the Forum was open to member States of the Forum and observers, the United Nations system, regional and subregional bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

4. The purpose of the meetings of the Forum was to share experiences and best practices among the Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding actions taken to implement the SDGs in the region.

II. Presentation of the Second annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean[1]

5. The Second annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflected the progress made by the region regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, namely, all countries had a medium-term development vision; the practice of planning had made a comeback, as had that of designing a national inter-institutional and intersectoral framework; and the regional architecture for implementing the 2030 Agenda had been strengthened; the SDGs had been integrated into national development plans and public budgets; transparency and open government had been afforded importance; and new spaces for dialogue between government, business, academia and citizens had been created. The challenges to be overcome included the difficult political situation at the global level, an increase in conservative movements and the re-emergence of nationalist currents in the world, which made it difficult to mobilize resources and consolidate

[1] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Second annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/FDS.2/3), 2018.

international cooperation projects. Fiscal spending had declined and global wealth was becoming more concentrated, which increased inequality. Corruption and public institutions' lack of credibility were eroding the path towards achievement of the SDGs.

6. The countries of the region now had a broader range of institutions responsible for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and they had identified planning and monitoring mechanisms for the SDG indicators. National statistical capacities had become stronger for measuring various indicators. However, efforts must be redoubled to strengthen statistical capacities for those indicators for which information was not available or was not measured according to the necessary parameters or level of disaggregation. Other agencies, such as central banks, needed to be involved in those efforts so that their data could be used to advance development goals. The collection, analysis and dissemination of big data was an essential tool that complemented official statistics; the joint work of the statistical and geospatial communities represented a significant contribution to the drafting of evidence-based public policies. It was also envisaged that the private sector would be play an important role in data processing and analysis in the region. The authorities on statistical matters in the region were the national statistical systems and the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

7. The report also drew attention to the most important challenges facing the region, such as forest cover loss, falling productivity and the need for liveable and sustainable cities and to change consumption and production patterns, control pollution in large cities, improve solid waste management and electricity access and increase the use of renewable energy, which would have a positive impact on the cost of power generation. Urgent and effective action must be taken to prevent the increasing number of extreme climate events, especially in the Caribbean, where building resilience to climate change was a pressing issue. On the tax front, steps should be taken to move towards a progressive regime and combat tax evasion and avoidance. The region's share of trade in goods and services needed to be increased, and intraregional trade integration needed to be strengthened to counteract the effects of external uncertainties. Promoting the technological and digital agenda would play a decisive role in achieving the SDGs in the region; and the speed and quality of broadband connectivity were issues to be resolved as part of the fourth industrial revolution. The report warned that the environmental big push would require the region to make a great effort of political leadership, governance, capacity-building and institution-building, as well as changing the conversation between State, the market and society.

8. The second meeting of the Forum represented an effort to change the future of Latin America and the Caribbean and reflected the political will of the countries, at a time when the region was in a position to show leadership in sustainable development. Three topics were crucial in that regard: the participation of citizens in the process of achieving the SDGs; developing a strategic people-centred vision, which ECLAC had defined as sustainable development with equality, and an analysis of each country's strategic advantages in the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

9. The SDGs demanded a holistic approach to public policies. As elements necessary for the achievement of the SDGs in the region, the member States present at the meeting drew attention to the involvement of civil society as a whole and of subregional governments; the mobilization of public and private resources; a change in production and consumption patterns; the transfer of technology and new, additional and predictable resources of all kinds under favourable conditions for developing countries; the elimination of unilateral coercive measures; the evolution of labour markets; reconsideration of GDP as an indicator of progress towards the

Goals; rural transformation; efforts to achieve an environmentally-friendly economy; and permanent monitoring of equality.

III. Peer learning sessions

10. The peer learning sessions addressed the following topics: (i) challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean; (ii) participatory approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda; (iii) platforms for follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals; and (iv) continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and new challenges.

11. With regard to the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean, countries drew attention to their particular difficulties, such as shortage of resources to finance the implementation of the SDGs, compounded by inefficiencies and corruption. De-risking policies were affecting correspondent banking and remittances in the Caribbean, restricting the countries' access to payment systems and global financing, risking the viability of their banking services and threatening to cut them off from the global financial system. Raising awareness of the contents and scope of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs among various sectors of society would help build understanding of the link between the SDGs and the efforts needed for national development. There was also a need for capacity-building and adequate human resources to ensure the effective implementation of the SDGs, in addition to which national labour forces were being affected by migration. One of the key challenges facing the Caribbean was the impact of climate change and vulnerability to natural disasters, as well as constraints on resilience-building owing to the lack of appropriate technology and capacity.

12. The proposals discussed for addressing those challenges included enhancing statistical capacity and knowledge-sharing partnerships, as well as the use of information and communication technologies for e-government. The various agencies operating in the Caribbean also needed to be better coordinated to formulate more effective strategies that support faster recovery after disasters. Redefining the classification system for disaster-affected countries would make it easier for them to obtain concessional financing in line with their real situation. ECLAC had proposed making the Caribbean a priority and called upon the governors of international banks (IMF, World Bank and IDB) to reduce the external debt of the countries in the subregion by establishing a resilience fund. ECLAC was working with the European Union and OECD to change the criteria for the classification of middle-income countries, which could be achieved with the support of member States.

13. The panel on participatory approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda discussed actions taken in the countries of the region to open spaces for dialogue with civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders. Citizen participation in the establishment of implementation mechanisms helped to ensure the visibility of women, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and Afrodescendants. It was essential to mainstream the human rights perspective in the implementation of the SDGs. Citizens' awareness of the 2030 Agenda was essential for ensuring their commitment to its implementation. The business sector also needed to become aware of the possibilities and gains offered by the activities related to SDG issues — in the area of alternative sources of energy production, for example — and actively participate in implementation. Academia played a crucial role looking forward, because of its work in raising awareness and shaping studies and knowledge. The work of States with local governments was critical, given that territories were different and therefore required different treatments. It was also important to have appropriate sources of financing for work in support of the SDGs, in particular from

tax sources. The process towards the achievement of the Goals should be based on State policies that extended beyond the terms of government mandates. The management of statistical information and institution-building were challenges for the region. Public policymaking and the engagement of all sectors were essential in moving towards the achievement of the SDGs, to which all the countries of the region were committed.

14. With respect to platforms for monitoring the SDGs, there was a need to build on existing measuring and monitoring systems, and to make further progress in strengthening the framework for aligning national development goals with the SDGs. It was important to place systems within an institutional context, as SDG monitoring was not merely about compiling statistics, but rather about coordinating public policies. Information needed to be integrated into a system accessible to citizens, not only to statisticians and policymakers. Given the availability of administrative records in the region that would serve for SDG monitoring, progress must be made in improving their quality and digitization. Data interoperability, open data and open sources, as well as the use of common standards among countries, would help to reduce costs and make the region more independent in that regard, as well as enhancing accountability and transparency.

15. With regard to continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and new challenges, it was emphasized that SDG implementation needed to be a policy of State, not of the sitting government, so that transitions between administrations would not hamper their achievement. The existence of institutional networks and citizen participation mechanisms would help to make sure that was the case. SDG 17 on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development required concerted, cross-cutting action by the range of stakeholders; only a participatory, intraterritorial and whole-of-government process would suffice to give continuity to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The environmental dimension needed to be just as integrated into development policies as the social and economic dimensions, as had been reflected in the voluntary national reports. Some countries of the region had already met certain SDG targets; others were not necessarily applicable in certain contexts. In still others, it was necessary to improve measurement and quantification of the targets and define the efforts needed to achieve them. In that regard, an analysis of the situation for each target in each country would facilitate the development of policies and budgets more in line with reality. Lastly, obtaining the necessary financing was one of the main challenges for continuity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

IV. Latin American and Caribbean and European interregional dialogue on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

16. The purpose of this dialogue was to exchange experiences and best practices between the two regions regarding the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, essential requirements for the effective implementation of the SDGs included a long-term commitment on the part of the State beyond the term of a single government; the engagement of all stakeholders, in particular the private sector and civil society; the design of cross-cutting policies; the existence of a non-political technical body to perform the measurement and evaluation of progress regarding implementation; regional and international cooperation, especially for experience-sharing and resource mobilization; the alignment of action by regional and international organizations with the realities of each country; linking national budgets to the priorities of the Agenda;

regular updating of the local and national legal framework; the development of communication strategies to democratize the content of the 2030 Agenda and to promote transparency and engagement by the State.

17. In the case of Europe, it was noted that the Goals and the values of the 2030 Agenda were very close to those of the European Union. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, where Europe had supported their achievement in other countries, the SDGs represented a universal agenda for the solution of shared problems and required the participation of all countries, regardless of their level of development. The European Union had created a high-level institutional structure responsible for promoting and coordinating the implementation of the SDGs in close collaboration with society and with the representation of different interests. The Goals had been incorporated into the European Union's cooperation policy, in line with SDG 17. The adoption of the new European Consensus on Development represented a collective vision of development policy that reflected the 2030 Agenda and involved cooperation with the countries of the region.

18. Actions have also been undertaken in Europe to raise awareness of the SDGs and their importance. Europe had much in common with Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of the diagnoses carried out and the centrality afforded to institutional arrangements and the challenge of mainstreaming. Implementing the SDGs required international cooperation to be closely linked with actions at the national level, which implied a different institutional structure than had operated thus far. In that regard, it was important to involve the institutions that naturally looked to the medium and long term, such as development banks. Challenges to international cooperation included the need to support the poorest countries and middle-income countries alike and to increase financing for development, particularly by mobilizing resources through national sources and private investment. The necessary incentives must therefore be provided, which could be achieved only if appropriate public policies were in place. There were similarities in the follow-up measures adopted in various countries. In that regard, society played a significant role as it encouraged accountability. Ensuring continuity required a renewed social compact on the targets to be achieved and the reforms needed to do so.

19. It was noted that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda required genuine commitment that emerged through dialogue and deliberation between governments and society as a whole. Just as high-level leadership was essential to ensure that all national strategies were in line with development goals, so too was the participation of all stakeholders, based on the principle of shared responsibility and with independent and regular monitoring, evidence-based reporting and accountability. Peer review was also a valuable monitoring tool.

V. The regional dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: contributions of the United Nations system

20. The United Nations was carrying out a reform of the peace and security pillar, the development pillar and its administration, which included the Secretariat, as well as the system's funds, programmes and specialized agencies. ECLAC and the system agencies complied with the mandates emanating from the member countries. ECLAC was an intergovernmental platform in which the 33 countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region took part equally and equitably, and in which countries from outside the region also participated; its subsidiary bodies enabled progress to be made in the region on specific topics. The Commission also provided technical cooperation and advice at the request of member countries. Over the course of its 70-year history of fruitful work, ECLAC thinking had been intrinsic to the economic history of the

region. The commitment of ECLAC had been and was still to support the countries of the region on the road to development.

21. At a time when multilateralism was under pressure from the global political context and the world was facing challenges such as inequality, climate change and conflicts, the United Nations must continue to partner efficiently with countries to achieve development, and for that its bodies must work in a cohesive, effective and accountable manner, guided by results. To that end, a reform is needed to establish a new generation of country teams that could respond to national needs; strengthen the resident coordinator systems with greater capacity, leadership, accountability and impartiality; adopt a coordinated, region-wide approach to face transborder challenges; renew spaces for Member States to guide the system's actions, with greater oversight, which would improve transparency and accountability with regard to results at the country level; lead the Organization to adopt an institutional response and a system-wide approach to partnerships for achieving the Agenda; take concrete steps to accelerate the system's alignment with the 2030 Agenda through a strategic framework; and adopt a financing compact to improve the quality, quantity and predictability of resources, in exchange for greater efficiency, transparency and accountability of the results across the system. That reform would be complemented by strengthening the role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). A dual approach has been proposed, which included optimizing collaboration and synergies at the regional level and renewing United Nations assets in the region. The United Nations reform would allow the Organization's activities to meet the needs of its Member States. The fundamental role of regional platforms such as ECLAC and its important work with other regional commissions was also highlighted.

22. Progress had been made in the region with regard to the 2030 Agenda, such as the creation of new inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, the formulation of development plans that take the SDGs into account, the review of national budgets to finance the SDGs and the expansion of policies that combine the three dimensions of sustainable development. However, countries had yet to overcome challenges related to, among other things, discrimination, in particular against indigenous and Afrodescendent peoples; gender inequalities; sustainable human developments; nutrition, especially in early childhood; the development of rural communities; and the strengthening of social security mechanisms, which were topics that bodies such as the United Nations Development Group-Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDG-LAC), UN-Habitat, WFP, IFAD, FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP, had explored in the work at the regional level. In addition to addressing the regional challenges together based on inter-agency collaboration, the work of the Resident Coordinators and the country teams was indispensable. The United Nations must support countries' activities and they in turn must ensure that their concerns are reflected in the documents submitted to the General Assembly.

VI. Dialogues on multi-stakeholder contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

23. During these dialogues the speakers underscored the importance of participation by the private sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the opportunity the Agenda offered for firms to align their business and corporate practices with the SDGs, which provided very clear complementary goals and targets. Business commitment to sustainability, which was rewarded by investors, needed to be part of business models and firms neglecting that compromised their viability, as markets could not prosper in societies that failed to respect the basic rights of their citizens.

Firms should convey that commitment in a transparent manner to their interlocutors, including government and investors.

24. International financial institutions contributed to improving the compilation and use of data for the benefit of open government. It was important to crowd in financing from the private sector by eliminating barriers to its participation in financing for development. The complexity of the SDGs required the formation of effective partnerships with a greater number of partners, both traditional and new. Academia should provide spaces for reflection and impact to develop ideas and solutions for the new challenges of sustainable development.

25. Civil society organizations emphasized the importance of disseminating the 2030 Agenda among young people, the effective participation of trade unions in the permanent mechanisms of implementation and follow-up of the SDGs, and the central objective of achieving gender equality across the board as a necessary condition for development. One of the main results of the Forum was the outstanding role played by civil society in organizing and creating a mechanism for participation in the Forum of the Countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development in a consensual, participatory and democratic manner, which enabled that key stakeholder to contribute more effectively to regional efforts related to the 2030 Agenda.

26. The Forum offered the opportunity for a profound and productive dialogue on the progress made by countries and the challenges they face in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The meeting had allowed the governments to share their experiences and learn from the experiences and best practices of difference countries and stakeholders, as well as the strategies that various international organizations had implemented to support countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The meeting had also allowed international agencies to gain a better understanding of countries' needs, creating a space for mutual learning and identifying opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. ECLAC was at the forefront of the regional dimension of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and played a fundamental role in supporting States' efforts to strengthen that space for exchange to offer all stakeholders the opportunity to listen to and learn from each other and share good practices.

27. Several participants drew attention to the creation and consolidation of the Forum as an important space for fruitful dialogue and mutual learning, compared to the global mechanism for follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, namely the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Major progress had been made with regard to the format and modalities of the Forum, and, more importantly, awareness of the topics and issues raised at the second meeting of the Forum.

VII. Dialogues on the shift towards sustainable development and resilient societies (Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17)

28. These dialogues took the form of three round tables, which examined the economic, social and environmental challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

29. With regard to the economic challenges, Latin America had made progress on drawing up a set of indicators, although the resources obtained fell woefully short of what was actually needed, which represented a major challenge when aligning budgets with the public policies aimed at achieving the SDGs. All available resources must therefore be mobilized for the countries of the region and developed countries

must honour their official development assistance commitments. South-South and triangular cooperation could also contribute to achieving the Agenda, although it was not a substitute for North-South cooperation. Climate change and the magnitude of natural disasters had had negative consequences for the region, forcing resources that could have been used to achieve the SDGs to be redirected to recovery efforts. To that end, synergies must be established among the countries of the region, which must reiterate the same message in international forums on those issues. The region had proved resilient in the face of external economic shocks, despite its ongoing dependence on natural resources and low-value-added exports. The 2030 Agenda required countries to transition to a green economy and a circular economy, in which science, technology and innovation were a cross-cutting element for achieving several of the SDG targets. Conditions must be created for the private sector to participate in the development process, tax systems must promote greater equality and illicit financial flows must be addressed. The international consensus on development needs within the framework of the Agenda must be translated into support.

30. Financing for development challenges facing the region included the existence of highly regressive tax systems, incentive schemes that were not clearly linked to development targets, alarming levels of tax evasion, and illicit financial flows (which were not necessarily derived from illegal activities, but rather were the result of foreign trade that had dodged tax liabilities), which meant that countries did not receive substantial resources that could have helped to finance the implementation of the SDGs. Faced with the problems created by weak taxation and the flight of resources from many of the region's economies, greater emphasis must be placed on the rule of law as an enabling factor for development, through law enforcement, legal certainty and the fight against crime, including financial crime.

31. One of the social challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda was inter-institutionality. Progress could not be made down the path to sustainable development or in the fight against inequality without ongoing inter-institutional and intersectoral efforts. Inter-institutionality must be robust and transparent and not affected by changes in government or holders of public office, to ensure that effective policies could be pursued. It was a complex task that had to be shaped continually and that would promote the efficient allocation of resources and prevent overlap between plans and programmes. Social issues were not confined to the social sphere, in the same way that economic and environmental issues were not confined to those spheres. They were interdependent dimensions that not only had a cause and effect relationship, but which also complemented each other and created synergies. That was why coordinated efforts among the different ministries and institutions was fundamental. It was also essential to promote efforts and dialogue among multiple stakeholders from the public sector, the private sector, academia and civil society to achieve the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The participation of civil society and stakeholders at the subnational level was of particular importance.

32. Efforts must be made to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among the different levels of government, as well as among all the stakeholders involved. However, an important challenge was the definition of roles and, more particularly, raising awareness of the need for each stakeholder to play the role assigned to them. Attention was also drawn to the importance of restoring trust in institutions and to the fact that those same institutions must take the lead in that regard. When the system privileged the well-being of all, economic growth produced development and, for that to happen, a political project was needed that pursued that objective. Science, technology and innovation created a link between social development and economic development, creating an enabling environment that would benefit education and training, which were crucial to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

33. With regard to the environmental challenges, attention was drawn to the need to address the growing demand for natural resources in the next few years, without eroding the availability of those resources for future generations. Economies and societies were inefficient in that regard, but policies could promote a shift towards efficient resource use. The indicators used to measure progress included green employment and green growth as cross-cutting factors to measure which actions could generate changes. It was essential to link environmental targets with productivity indicators, for example by applying subsidies to sustainable production activities. Environmental matters had to be approached from a long-term perspective.

34. The 2030 Agenda, more than having environmental goals, was environmental as a whole, because progress could not be made on health or industrialization without taking the relevant environmental considerations into account. There was an unbreakable link between environmental challenges and social and economic challenges. Where it was difficult to reconcile economic and environmental aspects in a positive manner, very often the environmental aspect lost out, owing to institutional design failures rooted firmly in inequality. For example, given that 60% of water went to agriculture, one way of moving towards its sustainable use (SDG 6) would be to limit the use of water in agriculture, but that conflicted with the need to increase food production to achieve food security for a growing population (SDG 2). To move away from the need to choose between the economic and the social, on the one hand, and the economic and the environmental, on the other, a culture of collaboration needed to be created between the three dimensions, a process that had to be done at the territorial level.

VIII. Special session on artificial intelligence: accelerated technological change

35. In this session it was remarked that the new technologies, especially artificial intelligence, represented a deep shift that impacted the production, labour, social and political fields. The region was engaging in analysis and discussion on the matter, both at the regional level and within the United Nations. The region needed to be more informed about the subject and its implications; the United Nations and ECLAC should compile, analyse and disseminate information in that regard to the countries of the region, while the countries should analyse options in relation to public policies, governance and regulation, and exchange best practices and foster education systems that promoted innovation. All that should form part of a collective effort to develop regulatory frameworks to address the impacts of artificial intelligence and the technological shift. It was proposed to create a Group of Friends of ECLAC to analyse that topic and to seek the support of the region overall following its recent inclusion as a permanent item on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly.

36. For the first time in history, not only human's physical skills, but also their cognitive skills, were being rapidly surpassed by smart, capable machines, which represented a radical transformation in economic, social, political, cultural, biological and cognitive terms. Institutions changed in a linear manner, whereas advanced technologies changed exponentially. Digitization and artificial intelligence were optimizing organization, management, hiring and the monitoring of the productivity of professional and manual workers. There was a shift in client relations and in firms' predictive and planning capacities. In the case of manufacturing, artificial intelligence had increased robots' skill and flexibility to address more and more economic activities and niches.

37. A noticeable effect in the developed countries was the reduction in new sources of work, which was putting pressure on labour markets, wages and companies'

standards of administrative and productive efficiency. It was possible that a sudden deindustrialization could occur in the region's maquila sectors. Technology by itself was neither good or bad; it was our responsibility to use it in the service of achieving the SDGs. While some affirmed that exponential technological change would continue to be led by the explosion of artificial intelligence, others concluded that rapid change would cause unstoppable socioeconomic risks. Regardless of those views, there was still time to forge the future we wanted.

38. The region was especially well placed to make a technological leap; however, inequality, socioeconomic polarization and the low educational standards of its labour force meant that most countries faced particular challenges of whether to adapt to the technological innovations coming from the rest of the world or generate their own. Latin America and the Caribbean urgently needed to reposition its development model and reconfigure the role of the State to spread the benefits and not only the risks of technological progress. The right use of digitization systems and artificial intelligence should enable the public and private sectors to collaborate more effectively to achieve the SDGs.

39. ECLAC had performed analyses of data, algorithms and policies, looking at digital technologies as tools for the achievement of the SDGs. The speed and disruptiveness of those technologies was an important consideration to bear in mind when undertaking activities to promote the region's sustainable development. It was necessary to analyse the speed with which technologies had developed and the readiness of individuals, families, firms and the government and public institutions to adapt to them and put them to beneficial use.

40. There was evidence of acceleration in three areas: the dynamics of employment creation and destruction; the obsolescence of labour skills, which posed challenges for education and vocational training systems; and the change in business models. There was also a risk of increased inequality, given that technology was one of the greatest drivers of income polarization and concentration. To mitigate the risks, specific learning and education activities should be implemented in all sectors and for all age groups aimed at greater employability. Production development policies should also be adopted that galvanize labour demand, create digital and broadband infrastructure and redesign labour institutions. The contribution of ECLAC to reflection on that subject had helped to broaden the spaces for discussion on the matter and would continue to generate valuable inputs that would benefit and help countries to evaluate and prepare for the effects of technological change, artificial intelligence and automation.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations of the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

41. The conclusions and recommendations were submitted to the plenary for consideration and adopted unanimously. They will be presented by the Chair to the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which will take place in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018.

Annex

[Original: English]

Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

We, the Ministers and high representatives gathered at the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago de Chile, from the 18th to the 20th of April, 2018:

1. *Reaffirm* our commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensuring that no one is left behind, including its Goals and targets, which are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental —, and stress that it is people-centred, universal and transformative and that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, being reaching the furthest behind first and empowering those in vulnerable situations crucial to sustainable development,

2. *Reaffirm* that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a global framework for financing sustainable development, as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda that supports and complements it, and helps to contextualize its means of implementation with concrete policies and actions to achieve its targets; recognize the synergies of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador, the SAMOA Pathway and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recommend further strengthening of multilateral cooperation at the regional and global levels for the effective implementation of the aforementioned instruments; welcome the numerous contributions and the support provided by the United Nations Development System at the regional level, aiming to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and reiterate the need that their activities are carried out in a coherent and coordinated manner and in line with national policies and priorities,

3. *Reaffirm* all the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in Principle 7 thereof,

4. *Stress* the importance to continue to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by countries in special situations, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries and countries in situation of conflict and post conflict,

5. *Reiterate* the call to the United Nations Development System, in consultation with international financial institutions, to address the specific development needs of middle-income countries through, inter alia, an accurate response to their needs, taking into account variables that go beyond per capita income criteria; recalls that 73 per cent of the world's poor population is concentrated in these countries where cooperation can have a multiplying effect to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals; and look forward to actively participate in the high-level meeting of the General Assembly during its 73rd Session

to discuss the gaps and challenges of middle-income countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

6. *Recognize* that the follow-up and review at the regional and subregional levels of the 2030 Agenda can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets, and that the resolution 700 (XXXVI) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) established the Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development, as a regional mechanism to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals and targets its means of implementation, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,

7. *Welcome* efforts at all levels to implement the 2030 Agenda and recognize that after almost three years of implementation, our individual and collective efforts have yielded encouraging results in many areas. However, given the challenges for the region to achieve sustainable development, in particular poverty, inequalities, high global debt and reduced levels of international cooperation, we underscore the need to accelerate both the pace of implementation and raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals at all levels, to secure our objectives for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership,

8. *Welcome* the ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and note with appreciation the adoption of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the sustainable development framework by 2030, resulting from the Thirteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and underscore that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and that the protection and full realization of their human rights are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, and in this regard recommend further streamlining a gender approach into national sustainable development policies and strategies,

9. *Stress* the need to take all measures necessary in order to leave no one behind, while respecting and promoting all human rights for all, including social protection and equal access to quality essential public services for all,

10. *Take note with appreciation* ECLAC's second annual report on regional progress and challenges on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, which provides an evidence-based analysis on opportunities and challenges for our consideration and informs some individual and collective actions carried out by our countries to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, even under an uncertain economic environment constraining the mobilization of resources, and take note of its recommendations to promote inter alia a structural progressive change from a sustainable development perspective, including the set of Sustainable Development Goals that will be reviewed in depth at the 2018 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development related to SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, and Goal 17 reviewed annually,

11. *Reaffirm* the commitment to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and welcome the launch of the International Decade of Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028; recognize that in addition to access to energy, it is still needed to ensure that it is affordable, reliable and sustainable; reiterate the commitment with sustainable urban development, recognizing that more than 80 per cent of the population of the region live in urban areas, and look forward to the regional action plan for the

implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean 2016–2036; reiterate the commitment to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and that people in our region have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature, and recognize the need to promote a structural progressive change towards sustainable development to protect ecosystems and biodiversity, reduce deforestation, combat desertification, land degradation and drought, foster strategies for the sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services in the region, and look forward for, inter alia, the global observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, on 17 June 2018, to be hosted by Ecuador,

12. *Commend* the 14 countries of the region that have already presented voluntary national reviews at the ministerial segment of the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC, and the 8 countries preparing to do so in 2018, and highlight the commitment and leadership shown by these 19 countries — of which 3 are presenting a second review — in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including by integrating it into their national strategies and adjusting institutional set-ups; recommend further volunteering and engaging in the upcoming High-level Political Forum, and look forward to the appropriate allocation of time both, for presentations and feedback from peer ministers,

13. *Welcome* the continuous efforts of countries from our region to implement the 2030 Agenda through its mainstreaming in public policies, institutional arrangements, and national and subnational follow-up and review, and the establishment of twenty national coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and encourage these countries to further deepen their national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to engage in in-depth knowledge sharing with peers and partners throughout the region,

14. *Acknowledge* the contribution of ECLAC and the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean to the indicators of the region in the second report, and recommend its contribution for the next one, and welcome the results of the 9th Statistical Conference of the Americas and its important contribution to advance in the generation of disaggregated, accessible, timely and reliable data, in order to identify inequalities and needs of the most vulnerable, ensuring that no one is left behind,

15. *Welcome* the ongoing process to strengthen and adapt the United Nations Development System to better support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and agree with the need stated by the Secretary General to revamp regional structures and look forward to consider the options for longer-term restructuring of the regional assets of the UN to be presented by the Secretary-General avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach; strongly commend the work carried out by ECLAC through its 70 years of existence and its continued effort to support country-led processes; commit to ensure that ECLAC functions and mandate are fully recognized and maintained, particularly its crucial role in the regional dimension of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and urge the Commission to fully engage in the Secretary General's initiative to revamp the regional assets in benefit of country-led processes and increase, within its mandates, regional initiatives to leave no one behind,

16. *Recognize* the importance of the environmental dimension as one of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and the role of multilateral institutions and agreements that set the global environmental agenda, promoting the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system; and also recognize the role of regional fora on

environmental action, such as the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, and its contributions for the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

17. *Recognize* the need to adopt a broader and more people-centred and inclusive preventive approach to disaster risk reduction, ensuring that the policies and practices cover multiple risks and people in vulnerable situations in our region, including by realigning the disaster financing to anticipate, plan for and reduce disaster risk, as well as to promote post-disaster recovery and reconstruction in order to improve efficiency, predictability and speed of response; and further welcome ECLAC's proposal of debt swaps for climate adaptation that address the unsustainable debt burden of the Caribbean economies affected by disasters, while creating a resilience fund to facilitate investment in climate adaptation thereby reducing their vulnerability,

18. *Take note* of the adoption of the "Escazú Regional Agreement" on Access to Information, Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in Escazú, Costa Rica, which constitutes an important step forward to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and invite all governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to consider becoming a member of the Agreement, which will be open to signature from the 27th of September 2018,

19. *Reaffirm* that States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries,

20. *Commit* to continue to promote a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO),

21. *Note with concern* that, despite some improvement in the global and regional economy, this recovery has not been shared among all countries and sectors; and that there are still structural problems aggravated by the reduced access to concessional finance, particularly for middle-income countries. In this regard, emphasize the importance for countries of the region of Official Development Assistance, call the developed countries to fulfil their ODA targets, and reiterate the importance to increase climate financing, which is additional to ODA; and further recognize the necessity of concrete and immediate action to create the necessary enabling environment at all levels for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including national efforts, international and regional cooperation that supports policies and programmes to increase investment in sustainable development; taking into account that every country has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity,

22. *Further recognize* that inequality, or even a rise in inequality, remains pervasive in countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean, even in those with high levels of economic growth, and that further investment in social services and economic opportunities are needed in order to reduce inequalities and that economic growth needs to be sustained, inclusive and equitable,

23. *Reaffirm* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also acknowledges that the implementation of sustainable development will depend on the active engagement of both the public and private sectors, and recognizing that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, encourage to align private sector incentives with national public goals towards long-term investment according to national realities and

capacities, including innovative financing instruments and approaches, to bridge the region's structural inequality gaps and eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions,

24. *Recommit* to a redoubling of its efforts to substantially curb illicit financial flows by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them, including by combating tax evasion, transnational organized crime and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international and regional cooperation, to reducing opportunities for tax avoidance,

25. *Reaffirm* that South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement to, not a substitute for, North-South cooperation and welcomes the contributions of South-South cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development; stress the importance of triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise; and look forward to a successful outcome of the Second High-Level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 20–22 March 2019,

26. *Reaffirm* the importance of mobilizing for our region financial and nonfinancial resources and capacity building for the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms as mutually agreed, and further recommend to increase international and regional cooperation, inter alia, for the development of endogenous science and technology,

27. *Reaffirm* that science, technology and innovation, including information and communications technologies are essential enablers and drivers for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in this regard, welcome the ongoing discussions in the I and II Forum on the impact of artificial intelligence on accelerated technological change in sustainable development; look forward to the Conference on Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean which will include a panel on emerging technologies for productivity and inclusion; as well as to the 21st Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, that will hold a high-level round table on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and to the Third Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, which will include a session on the impact of rapid technological change, including in cases in which changes may occur at an exponential pace, on the achievement of the Sustainable Developing Goals, in order to further elaborate regional recommendations within the Forum of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development; and urge the operationalization of the United Nations online platform as a gateway for information on existing STI initiatives, mechanisms and programs,

28. *Recognize* that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, as well as for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the national regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing its goals and targets, taking into account different national, realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities; and that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development,

29. *Welcome* the contributions of all relevant stakeholders to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region, and the participation according with the resolution 700 (XXXVI) of ECLAC, of parliamentarians, local governments,

private sector, civil society and academia at the Second Forum, and encourage their continued commitment to ensure that no one is left behind,

30. *Request* ECLAC to prepare an updated version of the progress report for the third forum and present it one month in advance, recommend the Presidency of the 37th Session of ECLAC to submit the second progress report, along with the present conclusions and recommendations with a Summary of the Chair, as regional contributions to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum and the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, as well as to the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for their due consideration,

31. *Express* our deepest appreciation to the Chair of the 36th session and ECLAC for organizing and hosting the second meeting of the Forum of the Latin American and Caribbean Countries.